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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 002624

SIPDIS

STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI  
NSC FOR CHRIS BARTON  
HQ USSOUTHCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/16/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: CHAVEZ DECLARES REFERENDUM VICTORY - SO DOES  
OPPOSITION

REF: CARACAS 2616 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Charles S. Shapiro  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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11. (C) Venezuelan National Electoral Council President Francisco Carrasquero announced August 16 that preliminary results showed 58% of voters chose not to revoke President Chavez. Opposition leaders rejected the result, claiming their exit polls showed that 59% voted in favor of revocation. International observers have yet to weigh in officially, but Carter Center representative Francisco Diez told the Ambassador that the results of their quick count coincide with the official preliminary results. The Coordinadora Democratica headquarters was attacked with tear gas during the night, and workers at Sumate left their offices temporarily for a number of hours when secret police (DISIP) personnel deployed near their building. The OAS and Carter Center planned a press conference at 11:30 AM. END SUMMARY.

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GOV ANNOUNCES A RESOUNDING VICTORY  
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12. (U) Long, slow-moving lines characterized the voting on Sunday. The polls were originally set to open at 6:00 AM and close at 4:00 PM, but the sluggish process prompted the CNE to extend the closing first to 8:00 PM, and a second time until midnight. Centers were required to remain open as long as voters were in line, and press reports indicate that votes were cast as late as 1:30 AM.

13. (U) National Electoral Council (CNE) President Francisco Carrasquero announced at 3:47 AM local time August 16 on national TV, that nearly 5 million people had voted not/not to revoke President Chavez from office, while nearly 3.6 million voted to revoke. He stated that this represented results from over 94% of all automated voting centers. Chavez appeared to a crowd of his followers at the Presidential palace shortly after, claiming a "clean, transparent and resounding victory," calling it "gift for Bush" that landed in the "nerve center of the White House." He characterized the result as "a victory that transcends the Venezuelan borders, and is also a victory for all Latin America." He was conciliatory toward the opposition, inviting "our brothers, come with us to this new period of moving forward and reconciliation."

14. (C) Chavez then thanked international observers from many countries (including the U.S.), as well as the OAS and the Carter Center, implying that they supported the result. At 2:00 AM on August 16, Francisco Diez of the Carter Center (CC) told the Ambassador that the Carter Center's quick count (based on printed summaries from a limited number of centers where observers were present) matched the official preliminary results announced by Carrasquero. The CC has not made a public announcement. The OAS has not yet provided information, publicly or privately. Gaviria and Carter are supposed to give a press conference at mid-day, August 16. As of noon, it has not started.

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Sumate Briefs on Its Numbers late August 15  
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15. (C) At 9:00 PM on August 15, Sumate representatives briefed the Ambassador and CODEL Weller and then the Carter Center and the OAS on their projections for the referendum results. According to Sumate, the opposition had won 59% of the vote. Sumate reported collecting data from 20,000 people from over 300 centers throughout the country. Based on their data, approximately 7 million people voted by 7:30 PM August 15 and about 8.5 to 9 million people would vote by night's end. Their exit polls suggested that the "Si" vote garnered

5.2 million votes, or 1.4 million more than the minimum required to revoke President Chavez. Sumate representative Roberto Abdul told Chairman Weller and the Ambassador that Sumate feared that the government would commit fraud in the night and release false projections by morning. Sumate presented a more detailed briefing to the CC and OAS at 11:00 PM August 15. Sumate's initial report given to the Ambassador and the international observers also criticized the CNE for the extraordinary delays in the voting process caused by the insufficient number of voting centers and tables at each center, the unnecessary use of the fingerprinting machines, and the last-minute changes in electoral officials at various voting centers.

-----mRa(quCoordina tor leader Henry Ramos Allup

publicly rejected the CNE's preliminary results in favor of "No" announced early August 16. Referring to data collected by Sumate, which showed the "Si" campaign winning, Ramos said that the opposition numbers were exactly opposite of those announced by the electoral body. He pointed out that for the CNE's numbers to be right, the opposition would have collected fewer votes in the referendum than it did signatures to convoke the referendum. He expressed solidarity with the opposition-affiliated CNE members Sobella Mejias and Ezequiel Zamora, who denounced CNE President Carrasquero's preliminary results. While Ramos Allup denounced the CNE for committing fraud, he did not call opposition supporters to the streets in protest. Instead, he said the opposition would fight this peacefully, democratically and constitutionally. He ended his statement noting that the opposition had shown their data to the international observer missions of the OAS and Carter Center and hoped they would acknowledge their version of the facts.

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COORDINADORA OFFICE TEARGASSED  
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17. (C) Daniel Thiman, aide to Miranda state Governor Enrique Mendoza, told poloff August 16 the Coordinadora's campaign headquarters in eastern Caracas was attacked with tear gas during the night. Thiman said the gas forced the occupants to evacuate; he described the aftermath as "very confusing." He said they believe the gas was launched from a street which runs just below the side wall of the Coordinadora's compound. Thiman said he walked for several blocks with his wife away from the compound and finally got his car and returned home. He said National Guard troops had also been spotted close to a nearby opposition building before midnight. Coordinadora representative Carlos Figueredo Planchart told Polcouns that members of the political police (DISIP) had also gone to the offices of the organization Sumate during the night. The police deployment, Figueredo said, forced Sumate to evacuate its offices temporarily.

18. (U) President Carter will meet with Ambassadors of the Group of Friends countries at 1700.  
Shapiro

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